

# A D A M F P O E T R Y

Jenny Kanzler and Infant America



Jenny Kanzler is a Philadelphia painter who I met in the late Aughts. When I look at her Aughts work, what stands out to me is a vision of both infantilism (its American manifestations) and the cognitive-affective lowliness attendant upon infantilism, rendered with the comic-horrific vividness and painterly skill of Goya himself. What Kanzler seems to be demonstrating in art, is something I have mentioned in my critical pieces as of late—the tendency, in America, towards the manifestation of short, stunted lives, lived at the behest of spurious interests and motivations, and against the grain of anything but pointless impulses to distort, destroy, and vilify higher consciousness. In short: an America in which everyone is a stunted child. What is the psychology of the infantile? What is reinforced would have to be an impulse (again) towards homogeneity, a willingness to hollow out individuality towards the greatest possible conformity to social norms, and also to follow herd mentalities into realms of pointless games and the destruction they engender.

Yet, Jenny is an artist first and foremost, and what makes her art appealing has everything to do with the strange beauty of her forms, the rigorousness of her formal technique (which separates her from other artists like Henry Darger who mine similar territory), and the sense of (as usual for Aughts Philly art) enchantment around/towards chiaroscuro, the apparitional, the eerie, and to narratives laden with twists and dark edges. Like Abby Heller-Burnham, Kanzler takes unlikely elements and makes them aesthetically appealing, and what is most luscious is meant to coincide with what is most haunting or eerie. The place in Kanzler's paintings for the kind of narrative reading the first paragraph suggests—that Kanzler means to represent a dystopic, generalized view of America and American shortcomings—is balanced also by an imperative to realize that, as with Henry Darger, the paintings could just as easily have been created from private fascinations and fetishes with lowly, stunted objects. So, those who view Kanzler's art are free to pick whatever approach they deem apropos. For me, what Kanzler adds to the Aughts Philly body of work is a sense of wonder shot through with foreboding, that in the multiplicity of its applications, enchants the viewer with the sense of another, shaded world imposing its reality on our own. As Kanzler's work is brought further to public attention, the Kanzler formal and narrative-thematic world, of fetishes for the lowly, stunted, horrific, and eerily beautiful, will be one intelligent audiences will be happy to get lost in, from Philadelphia on out.

## Poems

When You Bit and  
the Anxiety of  
Influencing

Painting: Jenny  
Kanzler (Philly,  
USA)

The Necessity  
of/for High Art in  
a Recession

Meta-Notes Part 3  
(youblisher)

Saint Matthew  
Church (left side  
angle): Fayette  
St...

Keats, Trish, Mind-  
Scapes

Chastity and  
Consummations

Yes: Four Songs

Intimations of  
Immortality:  
Odes, Elegies,  
and Pol...

fourW 25 Anthology

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